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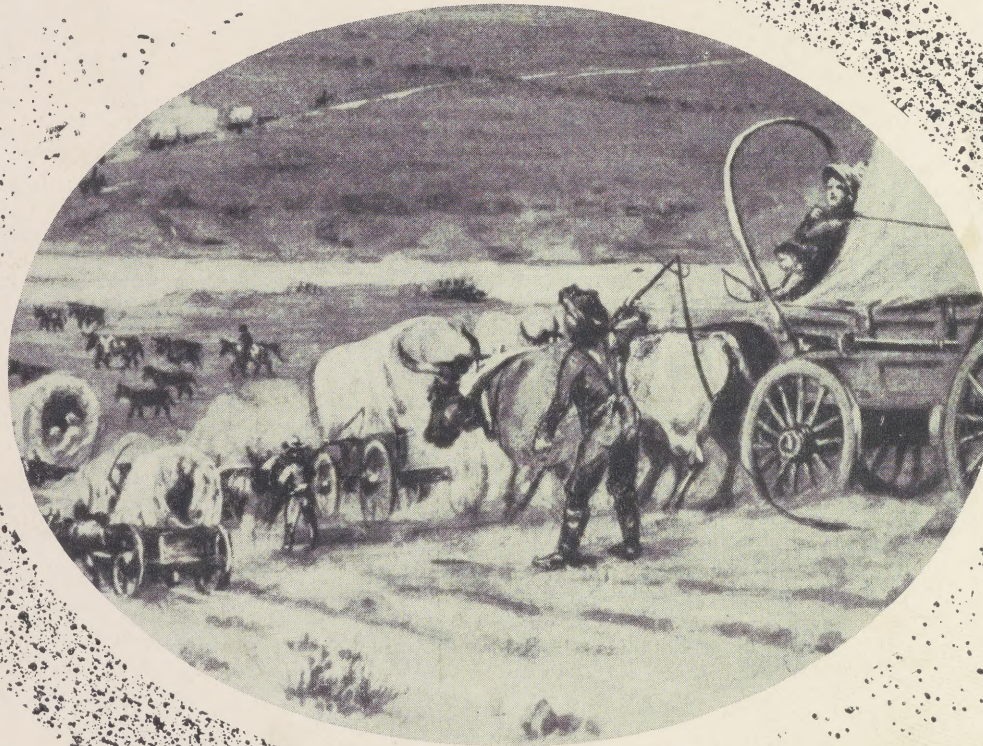
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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HIGHWAYS

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U. S. Department of Agriculture



OF HISTORY

. BUREAU OF PUBLIC ROADS

HIGHWAYS OF HISTORY

FOREWORD

PROGRESS in transportation is closely interwoven with the settlement and growth of the United States from its eastern beginnings to its present continental extent. No single factor has been more important in making possible this growth and the manifold developments that have accompanied it than has the ability of the American people to create new and improved means of transportation as the need arose.

If one pictures successive generations of our forefathers as passing across an imaginary stage of American history to depict important events of their times, there will be few that are not accompanied by new vehicles or other means of transportation better than those of their predecessors.

For its exhibit at the Golden Gate International Exposition at San Francisco, the Bureau of Public Roads has chosen to present such a pageant, giving emphasis to the

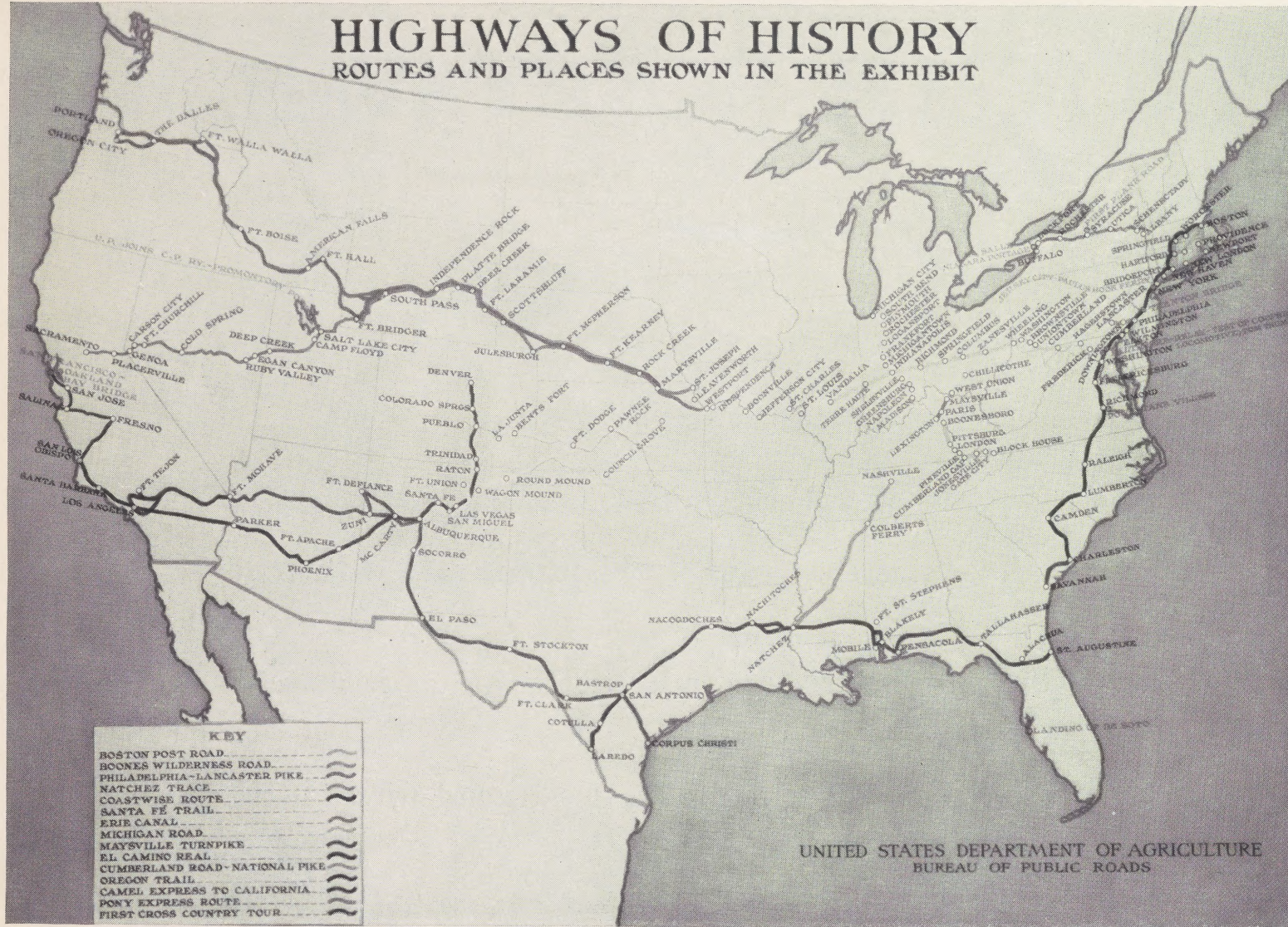
history of highways, since this is the subject of its own official interest. There passes before the eye of visitors to the Bureau's exhibit a succession of scenes beginning with the first landing of horses in the new world and the first acquaintance of the settlers with Indian canoes and ending with a representation of modern highways and their uses.

These scenes are depicted in thirty-five dioramas, which, by means of a mechanical device and mirrors, are brought successively into view and are described by a synchronized recorded narration of the history and significance of the events pictured.

The thirty-five scenes are reproduced, as well as black and white can picture them, in the following pages, and opposite each is printed the appropriate part of the exhibit's spoken narrative.

HIGHWAYS OF HISTORY

ROUTES AND PLACES SHOWN IN THE EXHIBIT



THE history of our highways as they grew from primitive Indian trails into high-speed automobile roads tells the story of our civilization as it marched westward from the Atlantic to the Pacific past mountain, desert, and forest barriers, and left in its wake great industrial cities in place of scattered log-cabin settlements.

HIGHWAYS OF HISTORY

*The Pictorial Story of the
Improvement of Transportation in
Colonial America and the United States
During the Past Four Centuries*



THE COMING OF THE HORSE

HORSES had been extinct in the New World since prehistoric times when the Spaniards introduced the forefathers of the modern horse. The explorer Hernando De Soto probably brought over the first horses that had set foot on the soil of the present United States when he landed his favorite mount Aceituno from a caravel.

HIGHWAYS
OF HISTORY



1539

THE INDIAN CANOE

WHEN Captain John Smith met the great chief Powhatan at his Indian village on the James River downstream from what is now Richmond, Virginia, the Atlantic Ocean and its tributary streams formed the main highways of America and canoes dug out of charred logs were the favorite vehicles of the first families.

HIGHWAYS
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1607

THE PORTAGE PATH

SEVENTY YEARS rolled by. Now French explorers in search of a direct route to China traveled overland from one river to another. Here stand Robert Cavalier Sieur de La Salle and his bosom companion Franciscan Father Membré on the portage path around Niagara Falls on their way to the Mississippi River.

HIGHWAYS
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1679

THE TOBACCO-ROLLING ROAD

TOBACCO was the money crop of Colonial America. Southern planters rolled hogsheads filled with the precious weed from field warehouses over tobacco-rolling roads to the river landings for shipment to the English mother country far across the sea. The rope in the hands of the Negro was used as a brake.

HIGHWAYS
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1760

THE BOSTON POST ROAD

MEANWHILE in New England, on the Boston Post Road from New York, Postmaster General Benjamin Franklin, riding in a one-horse shay, accompanied by his daughter on horseback, made a tour of inspection of the Colonial post offices. A tireless post rider delivered to his chief an urgent letter along the way.

HIGHWAYS
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1763

THE FLYING MACHINE

THE Flying Machine was the first attempt at rapid transportation in the British Colonies in North America. Two days of hard driving were required to cover the ninety-mile distance from Philadelphia to the Paulus Hook Ferry, now Jersey City. The stage made the trip twice a week.

HIGHWAYS
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1766

THE WILDERNESS ROAD

FOR a century and a half the British settlements in America were confined to a strip of land one hundred and fifty miles wide along the Atlantic seaboard. Then just before the Revolutionary War courageous Daniel Boone began the westward movement over his Wilderness Road through the Cumberland Gap across the Allegheny Mountains.



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1774

THE PHILADELPHIA-LANCASTER PIKE

CHAOTIC economic conditions following the War of the American Revolution delayed the beginning of organized road improvement. In 1795 a privately-owned toll company finished the first extensive broken-stone surface in this country on the sixty-two mile Philadelphia-Lancaster Pike. The hospitable Eagle Tavern was fourteen miles from the Quaker City.

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1795

THE NATCHEZ TRACE

JUST before the Louisiana Purchase, Congress ordered opening of the Natchez Trace from Nashville, Tennessee, to Natchez on the Mississippi. Over this path flatboatmen traveled homeward after floating their laden craft down the Ohio and Mississippi to New Orleans; and here at Griner's Tavern Governor Meriwether Lewis of Louisiana lost his life in 1809.



HIGHWAYS
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1809

GROWTH OF COASTWISE TRAVEL

THE infant highway system was overtaxed during the war of 1812 when the British blockade bottled coastwise sailing packets in the harbors. The freight business between New England and the South was transferred to the Conestoga wagons which with carts and coaches rumbled over the Delaware River bridge at Trenton, New Jersey.

HIGHWAYS
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1814

THE SANTA FÉ TRAIL

THE Santa Fé Trail from the western frontier of the United States at Independence, Missouri, was the first of the overland roads to the Far West. At the starting point near the Missouri River the traders tightened their steel wagon tires in preparation for the long journey across the plains.

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1822

THE ERIE CANAL

IN THE EAST, canals challenged the supremacy of the horseways. The Erie Canal, completed in 1825, provided an almost level water route across the Appalachian Mountain barrier to the Great Lakes. New York, thus joined with the new States carved from the Northwest Territory, now displaced Philadelphia as the leading metropolis of the country.

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1825

THE MICHIGAN ROAD

MEANWHILE the French Canadian, Pierre Frieschutz Navarre, with his fur-trading cabin on the east bank of the Saint Joseph River was laying unknowingly the foundation for the future city of South Bend. Over the Michigan Road, connecting the Ohio River with Lake Michigan, settlers poured into Indiana to take up homesteads.



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1826

THE MAYSVILLE TURNPIKE

THE Maysville Pike through the Blue Grass Region of Kentucky recalls the failure to win Federal aid for a southwest branch of the National Road from Zanesville, Ohio, to New Orleans. President Andrew Jackson vetoed the bill. With equal vigor toll-gate keepers refused to accept worthless coins.

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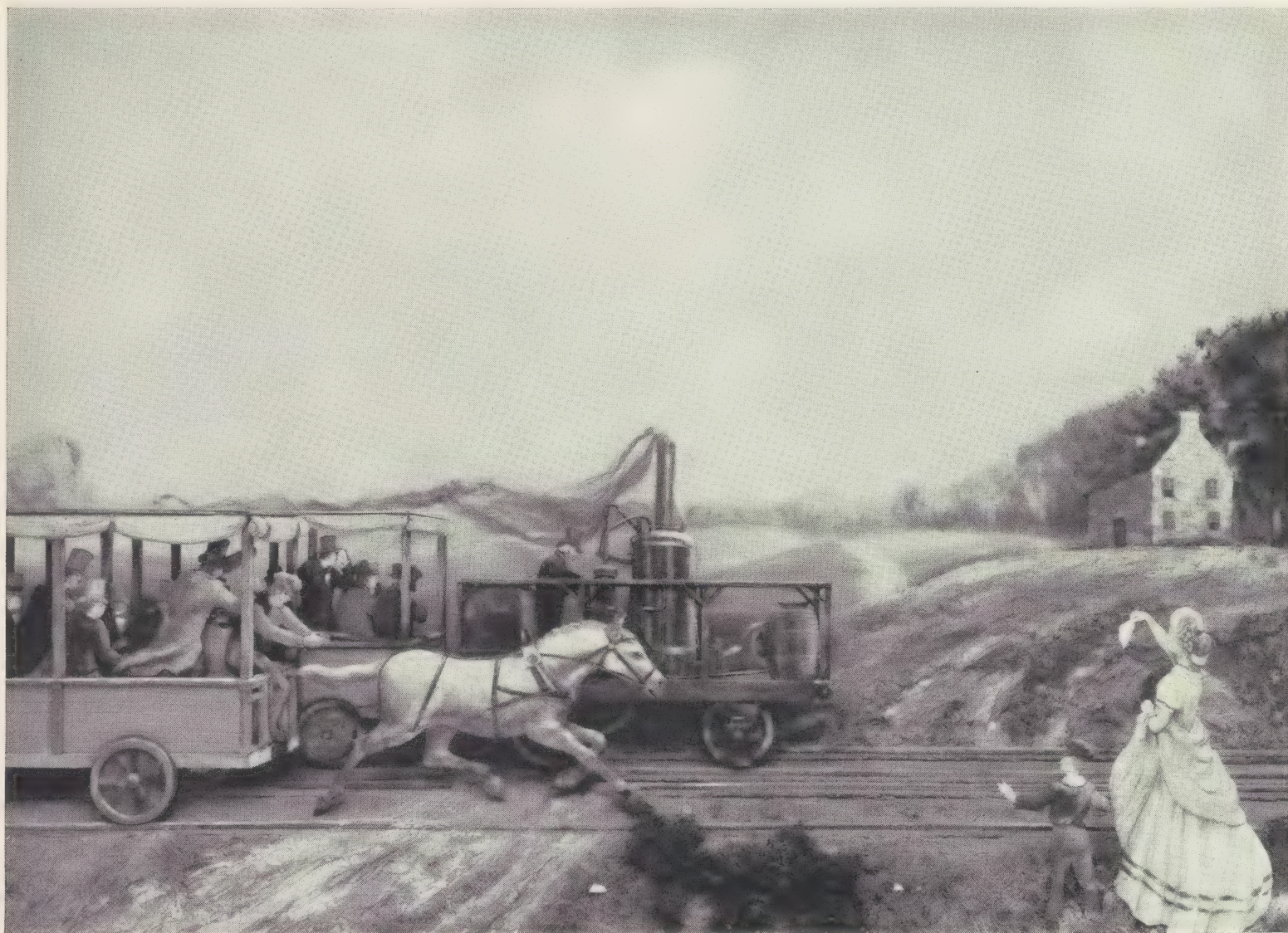


1830

THE IRON HORSE WINS

BUT now a new contender rose to challenge the highway and waterway for the right to serve the growing Nation's transportation. On the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, Peter Cooper's Tom Thumb locomotive, because of a breakdown, lost the race with a horse-drawn car, but proved none-the-less the superiority of the railway.

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1830

EL CAMINO REAL

WHILE the struggle for survival of the best kind of transportation was raging east of the Mississippi River, settlers were pushing southwestward. Past the Alamo, stormed shortly before by Mexican troops led by General Santa Ana, covered wagons, carreta carts, and pack animals moved slowly along El Camino Real.

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1836

THE NATIONAL PIKE

BEGUN in 1806 to serve the Territory Northwest of the Ohio River, the National Pike was the first main road built with Federal funds. By 1840 at the eastern extremity near Cumberland, Maryland, freight-wagon and stage-coach owners began to feel the loss of business to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.



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1840

THE OREGON TRAIL

THE trickle of trappers to the Northwest when Astoria was founded in 1811 had swelled to a mighty stream of settlers with the Great Emigration of 1843. The Oregon Trail over the Rocky Mountains and down the Columbia River formed, with the extended National Pike, an overland connection from coast to coast.

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1843

THE PLANK ROAD CRAZE

WITH railroads east of the Mississippi far in the lead in the transportation race, feeble experiments were tried to better wagon roads. The first plank road, opened to travel in 1846, from Syracuse to Oneida Lake, New York, lasted like its successors about ten years before it rotted away.

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1846

"DARK AGES" OF THE ROAD

BY 1850 the speed of the fastest trains averaged about twenty-five miles an hour and railroads were carrying passengers and freight over long as well as short distances. Conestoga-wagon and stage-coach companies were failing and the high-ways were often muddy, rough, and well-nigh impassable.

HIGHWAYS
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1850

THE CAMEL EXPRESS

TO SPEED NEWS to the California gold region, a "Lightning Dromedary Express" was placed on the route from Albuquerque to Los Angeles, in 1857, by Secretary of War Jefferson Davis. The experiment failed partly because the easy-going camels imported from Egypt and Arabia provoked the anger of the impetuous American mule drivers.

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1857

THE PONY EXPRESS

THE Pony Express, first overland mail service from St. Joseph, Missouri, to California, brought San Francisco ten days nearer to New York. Outdone after sixteen months, in 1861, by the Pacific telegraph line, the messages carried by the riders helped to preserve the Union at the outbreak of the Civil War.



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1860

THE MEETING OF THE RAILS

NINE YEARS later the junction of the Union and Central Pacific railways at Promontory Point, Utah, captured the business of the eight-year old stage-coach lines that had shifted because of the Civil War from the southern ox-bow route to the central road between the Mississippi River, Denver, and the Pacific coast.

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1869

BICYCLING DAYS

A GENERATION came to manhood and found its country roads in truly wretched state. Four million devotees of the "safety," often in the "Nineties" found cross-road signs puzzling, maps unintelligible, and farmers indifferent to their plight. Weary and lost this feminine cyclist thought of her sailor hat as a storm approached.

HIGHWAYS
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1892

THE HORSELESS CARRIAGE

THE breaking dawn of the twentieth century discovered another new thing upon the highways—a horseless carriage! Propelled by newly discovered internal combustion engines, the pioneer “benzine buggies” had many a mechanical defect to tax the patience and the ingenuity of their drivers, and make them the laughing-stock of the countryside.

HIGHWAYS
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1900

THE MOTOR PATHFINDERS

THE first transcontinental motor-vehicle tour was made in 1911. A Saurer motor-truck, called the "Pioneer Freighter," weighing seven tons loaded, covered the fifteen-hundred-mile run from Denver to Los Angeles in sixty-six days. The four-man crew reported great need of road improvement in the Southwest.

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1911

MUD AT THE STATE LINE

FOSTERED by State aid since the advent of the bicycle, good roads had been extended by 1916 to the boundaries of some States, where travelers often found their progress halted by lack of similar initiative in the adjacent State. To promote the improvement of interstate routes Congress passed the Federal-aid Road Act.

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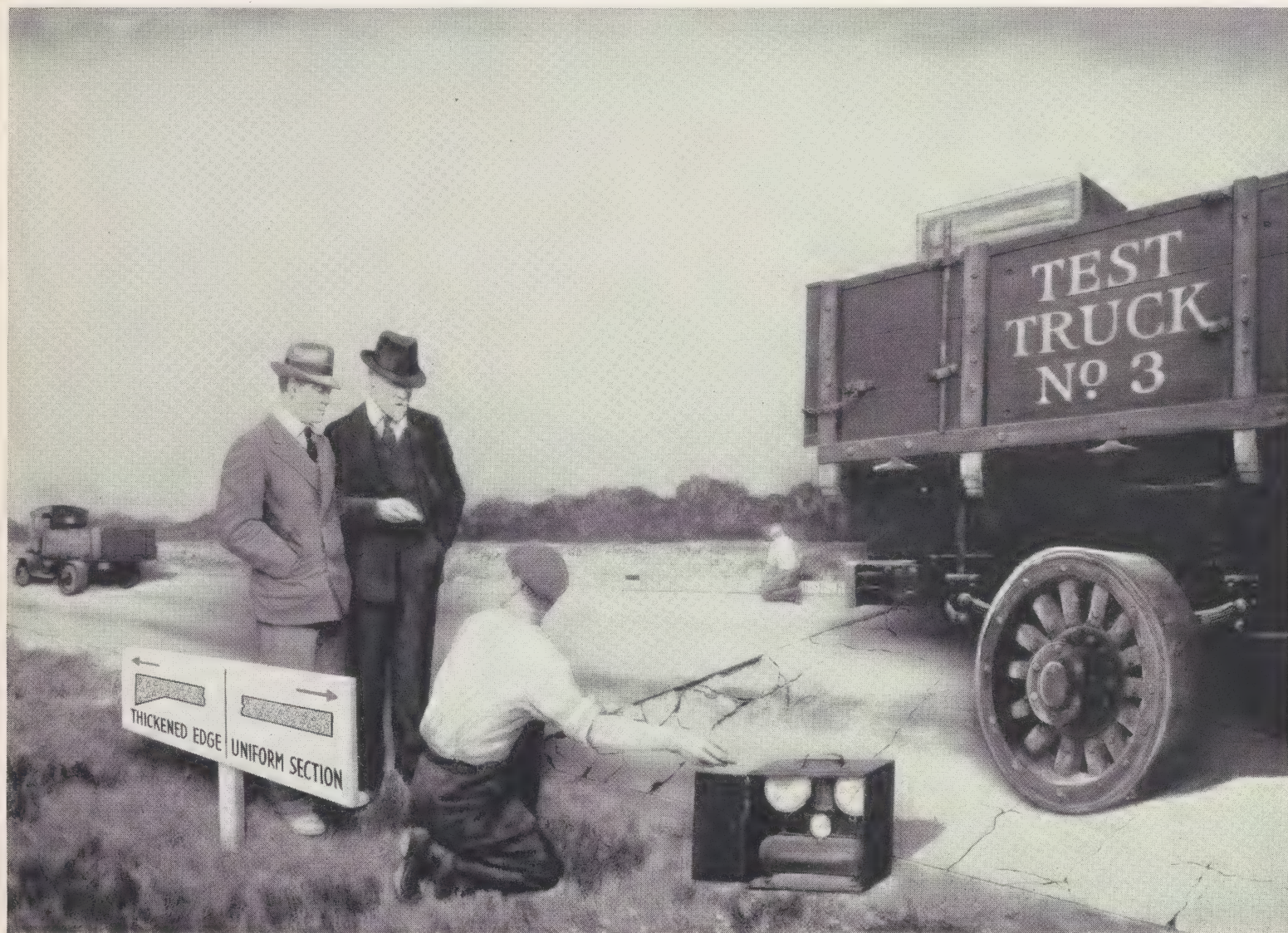


1916

BEGINNINGS OF HIGHWAY RESEARCH

FAST-MULTIPLYING heavy loads on solid-rubber tires raised problems never presented by wagon loads on tires of steel. Large-scale engineering research in Federal laboratories at Arlington, Virginia, and on experimental roads at Bates, Illinois, and Pittsburg, California, produced these important answers—balloon tires and thickened pavement edges.

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1920

ADOPTION OF UNIFORM SIGNS

AS THE early disconnected improved roads of each State grew into continuous long-distance routes, travelers became bewildered by a confusion of different signs erected independently in each State. To speed the tourist on his way uniform numbered United States shields and signs were adopted, in 1925, for Nation-wide use.

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1925

ROADS TO SERVE THE LAND

IN 1933 all road improvement was quickened by large grants made by the Federal Government to provide work for the unemployed. Speeding work on the main highways and city streets, the Federal Government also for the first time extended Federal aid to the improvement of the farm-to-market roads.

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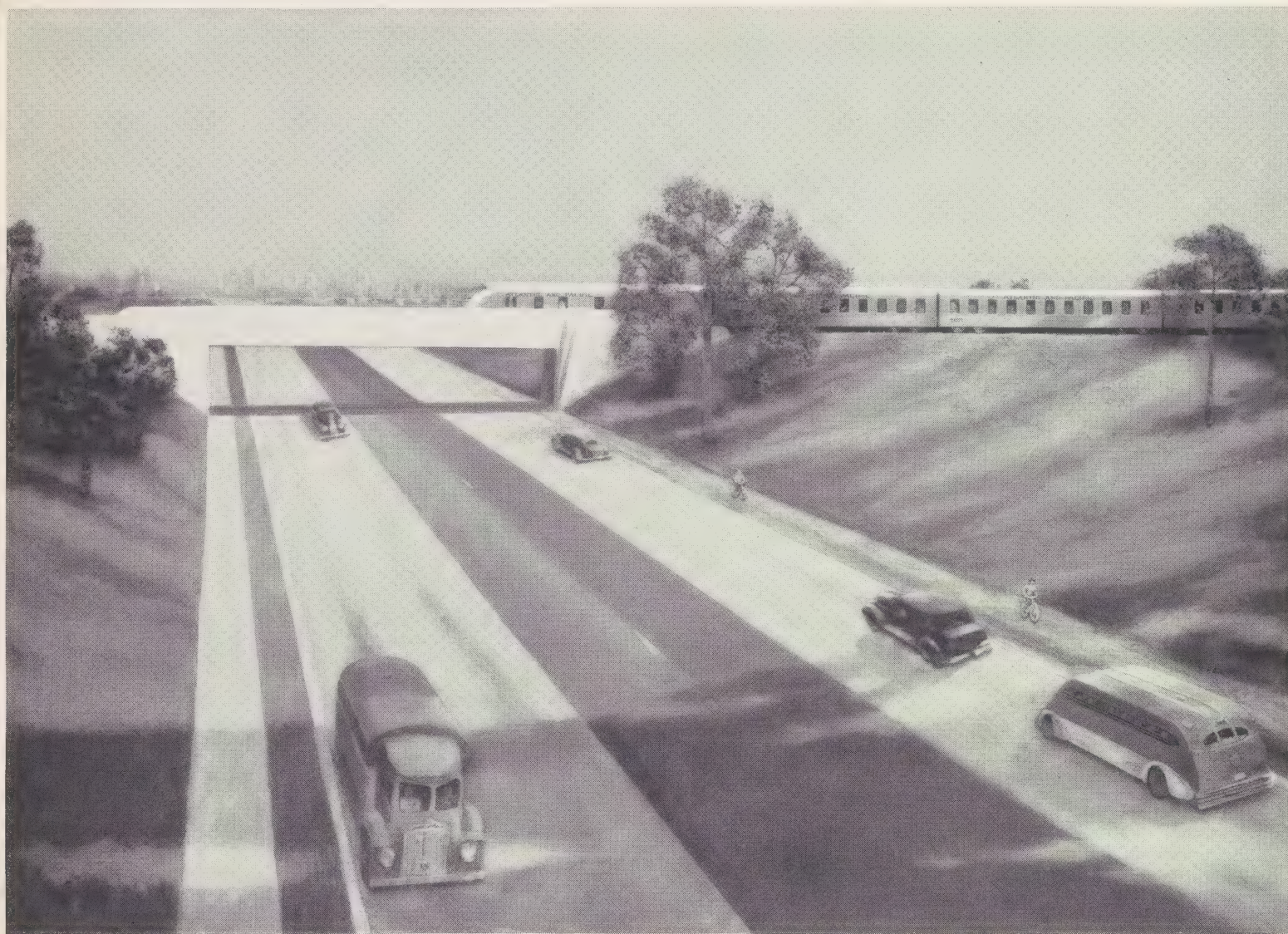


1933

RAILROAD CROSSINGS BRIDGED

AS ONE means of reducing the heavy toll of traffic accidents, special Federal funds were appropriated to make railroad crossings safer. The thousands of bridges that have been built each year will safeguard many lives and also save motorists annoying stops while waiting for passing trains.

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1934

VIADUCTS IN CITIES

IN CITIES too, the new Federal Funds for elimination of hazards at railroad grade crossings made possible the construction of long viaducts doing away with many dangerous crossings and putting a stop to the long delays of heavy traffic on important streets, occasioned by shifting freight trains.

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1935

ROADSIDE BEAUTY RESTORED

COMPARATIVELY small annual expenditures for landscaping and planting, encouraged by the Federal Government, are fast restoring the natural beauty of American roadsides. Gently rolling, grass-covered side slopes, replacing water-washed steep embankments, please the eye and pay extra dividends in added safety and the prevention of soil-destroying erosion.

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1936

CITY ENTRANCES AND BELT LINES

EXPRESS HIGHWAYS will soon conduct entering traffic safely and quickly to the heart of the city; and alternate belt line routes will speed travel around the city and between its suburbs. Complete separation of opposing and intersecting traffic streams, as demonstrated here, will make future main highways ideally safe and efficient.

HIGHWAYS
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1938

A HIGHWAY MASTERPIECE

AND SO at the end of our pictorial history of the highways of America, we salute an engineering masterpiece of the twentieth century—the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge! Product of the young and vigorous West, it typifies, in all its beauty and strength and its manifest immense usefulness, the highways of tomorrow!

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1939

